



NRC NEWS

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NRC AMENDS EVENT NOTIFICATION REGULATIONS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is amending its notification and reporting requirements for safety and security events involving licensed nuclear facilities and the transportation of certain types of nuclear material.

In a *Federal Register* notice published today, the NRC is issuing a final rule changing several safety-related reporting requirements for independent spent fuel storage installation (ISFSI) and monitored retrievable storage (MRS) facility licensees to help ensure that licensees promptly inform NRC and State officials of events or conditions that could adversely affect public health and safety.

The revisions contained in the final rule are expected to result in enhanced regulatory efficiency, effectiveness, and realism by making the requirements for reactors and ISFSIs, which are usually located near reactors, more consistent; reducing the number of duplicative or supplementary reports required of licensees; and ensuring that reports are received at a time consistent with NRC's need for them.

The changes will consolidate some notifications and lengthen, where appropriate, the reporting period for other notifications. The time extension is based on simplicity for reporting, importance to safety, and consistency of reporting times with the need for prompt NRC action.

New requirements have been added to improve NRC's ability to respond promptly to degrading conditions at licensee facilities during an emergency. For example, licensees will be required to submit an immediate followup report for degradation in the level of safety of an ISFSI or MRS facility, including a declaration of an emergency, a change from one emergency classification to another, or termination of an emergency class. This revision will enable NRC to determine if an immediate response or corrective action is necessary to protect public health and safety. These requirements are consistent with those for reactor licensees as amended in October 2000.

The final rule also eliminates the redundant requirement that licensees notify the NRC no later than four hours after a fire or explosion that affects the integrity of spent fuel or high level waste or its container. The report of such an event instead would be provided immediately, when an emergency is declared, under the licensee's approved emergency response plan.

The final rule also adds a requirement that licensees notify the NRC no later than four hours after the discovery of any event or situation involving spent nuclear fuel or high level waste related to the protection of public health and safety or onsite personnel, or that of the environment, for which a news release is planned or notification to other governments has been or will be made. This requirement is consistent with current reactor licensee reporting requirements.

In addition to these changes to the safety-related verbal and written followup notification requirements for ISFSIs and MRS facilities, the NRC is revising the written followup notification requirements for security-related events involving reactor facilities, fuel cycle facilities, ISFSIs, MRS facilities, licensees who transport spent fuel or special nuclear material, geological repositories, and gaseous diffusion plants. The final rule changes the timeliness requirement for these security-related written followup notifications to be consistent with safety-related written followup notifications. However, the NRC is not changing any security-related verbal notification requirements in this final rule.

Following publication of the proposed rule on August 22, 2002, NRC received four comments, none of which opposed the agency's intention to modify the reporting requirements. There are no significant changes between the proposed and final rules.

The final rule will become effective on October 3. For technical information regarding the rule, contact Mark Haisfield, (301) 415-6196.

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